

An Essay
on
The qualifications and duties of the physician.

Respectfully submitted to the Faculty
of
The Homoeopathic Medical College
of
Pennsylvania.

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by

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While the savage roams from infancy to decrepid age amid nature's scenery, discovering but little of the beauty and simplicity of her laws; - the man of science beholds in her vast laboratory, objects of endless variety and surpassing grandeur, and as this jewelled index of genius points to the glorious pages of Infinite wisdom and Almighty power, as presented in the bright volume of Creation, he discovers the immutable order, and admirable harmony of her laws. So the physician - the true minister of nature - must invoke the aid of science in his investigations of the laws of life and health, entering upon, and prosecuting his work with all the devotion of the Hebrew and zeal of the Greek. And here let it be understood, that virtue and science should go hand in hand; while the one is to be kept constantly in view, the

other is never to be overlooked. *Morus aenus, consuetudo sana, et nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus.* One commissioned to the ministry of an art claiming to control in all its length and breadth the mysterious phenomena of life, by removing the infirmities of the body, must be familiar with its organization - complete master of the minutest and most abstruse points of Anatomy and Physiology in health, and Pathology in disease! The medicinal and remedial agents which he employs, are gathered from the material world around him, hence an intimate companionship with Chemistry is required: and while Geology and Mineralogy, at his solicitation yield their stores, his mind should be perfumed with the rich treasures which Botany reveals. Nor is he to investigate the material world alone. His occupation leads him into ceaseless

contact with the immaterial part of the universe. The body is not the only object of his care. Mind and matter are too intimately and mysteriously commingled to be successfully studied or treated apart. Intellectual Philosophy here forms a link in the golden chain of science, enabling him while ministering to a "mind diseased", to become more or less conversant with its workings. The laws of Physics are important and ought to be investigated; revealing as they do, the phenomena of light and caloric, electricity and magnetism, as well as cosmical influences constantly acting, in air, on land and sea, require familiarity with their varied operations. Etiology, pointing to the causes of disease, will introduce him to their effect- disease itself- Semiology, will present the phenomena of disease- Nosology, the

division and classification - Diagnosis, their distinction - Therapeutics, their treatment - Prognosis, their result, and Prophylaxis and Hygienics, their prevention. And finally in this field may be noticed, last in order, but first in importance the Materia Medica. The importance of a thorough knowledge of this branch is incommensurate: and so indispensable is it that all available facts in this department, be at his disposal and ready at his bidding, that without them he is at best but groping in darkness and wavering in doubt. I know the task is an Herculean one, but it can - it must be accomplished. Nil sine magno vita labore dedit mortalibus. A knowledge of this, like that of any other department of science, is only purchased at the expense of persevering labor and patient toil. To use the language of an other, "All his

other acquirements are but the amusements of a
leisure hour, to the steady, toilsome acquisition
of this indispensable knowledge. But without
it, he is nothing. In the chambers of his mem-
ory must be suspended, side by side, in some
true, convenient order, the historical pictures de-
scriptive of his drugs, and here he must
bring his tablets of disease for comparison." It
is not sufficient then, that the physician
be wrapped in embossed envelopes of scien-
tific nomenclature, indorsed with classic tech-
nicalities, and stamped with that dogmatical
air of assurance so characteristic of the novice,
skilled only in that index learning.

"Which turns no student pale;"
but no branch of useful knowledge should
be to him a sealed book. We should keep
pace with the progressive march of modern

discoveries and improvements, while no opportunity to collect, examine and compare the theories of the learned should pass unimproved - not to be treasured up as mere imagery to adorn the mind or please the fancy, but that he may turn them to "Some good account" - call into play all the better functions of mind, and at the same time contribute something to the intellectual elevation of the profession: - and thus the Medical art, instead of lingering in the rear of science, may lead the van - lay claim to this legitimate child of her household - pluck the flowers of perennial bloom and unrivalled beauty that lay at her feet, and win for herself the laurels, which in her long years of loitering fame has justly placed upon the brows of others - not that I would have him luxuriate in the

exuberance of knowledge to the exclusion of others, or by lowering that which is truly exalted, but by elevating that which is unduly depressed. But I must pause. It would neither comport with the proposed design nor prescribed limits of this paper, to dwell longer upon the intellectual abilities, mental culture, literary attainments and scientific investigations, which are the beacons that are to light his path through the tempest tossed ocean of human suffering, on which he has launched his noble bark and spread his hopeful sail. Admitting his qualifications in these respects to be all that could be reasonably expected, or even possibly desired, and yet, without conscience for his compass, and virtue for his chart - without an abiding sense of duty towards his patients and a heart devoted to his calling, he will fail -

wofully fail in accomplishing the great objects
of his voyage. His bark, although it have a ballast
of gold and a sentinel of faithful friends, will
suffer shipwreck on the shoals of disgrace, or be
stranded upon the quicksands of reproach; ere he
has fairly cleared his moorings, or his canvas
has been inflated by the auspicious breath of grat-
itude, emanating from the warm hearts of those
who might have been relieved from bodily
pain, or mental depression by his benevolence &
skill. In the practice of medicine there is much
that is truly sublime. He who enters upon it
should possess a head to conceive, a heart to
resolve, and a hand to execute every good
work - being largely endued with the spirit of
Him, "Who healeth all manner of diseases," and
whose incarnate existence and triumphant
career, is beautifully expressed by an inspired

penman in the simple and unadorned phrase, "He went about doing good." The physician's sphere is a religious one; and all his motives and actions, should be so regulated by the claims of conscience - by the incommensurate and unavoidable responsibilities resting upon him as an intelligent and accountable being, that when submitted to the rigid analytical crucible of public sentiment, and the uncompromising test of truth, the fine gold of virtue will be the uniform result. A pursuit involving so many claims as that of medicine, demands of him who follows it, an aptitude to inspire confidence - hence the physician should be courteous without affectation - cheerful without levity - sympathizing and cordial - strictly punctual - rigidly temperate - characterized by sterling integrity.

unwearied patience, undaunted courage and self-denying toil - calm deliberation and yet prompt and decided action - in a word, he should possess all the moral sentiments and manly virtues of a mind which worships at no earthly shrine but that of Truth: and so essential a part of his qualifications are these, that, where wanting, - "A medical license to practice is but little better than a legal license to destroy."

The physician's relation to the public is not only a responsible, but also a peculiar one. He is, in a less limited sense than might at first appear, the man of the people; and public opinion is of the same importance to him, that the rise or fall of stocks are to the speculator - that the state of the market is to the merchant.

or the spirit of the age to the philosopher.
He should not therefore be unwearied of the
employment of the proper means necessary
to win for himself a reputation. In a pro-
fessional point of view, the principal duties
of the physician are to relieve suffering, pro-
long life, and in a prompt, mild and persua-
sive manner to restore health to the sick.
The greater his opportunities, the more certain
and complete will be the attainment
of his object, and the greater benefactor will
he be of his race. Inasmuch as his use-
fulness depends, *ceteris paribus*, upon the
good opinion of the community in which
he resides, it devolves upon him, not merely
as a permissive right, but as an imperative
duty, to make all laudable efforts to se-
cure the confidence of those to whom his

professional services are tendered. At times
that extraordinary abilities and striking suc-
cess may sometimes, as it were, force public
sentiment and the reckless and unsupervised
practitioner may rise in spite of general dis-
like; but instances of this kind are rare and
serve only to verify the oft-repeated aphor-
ism, *Exemptio probat regulam*. The young phy-
sician has gradually to rise in public esti-
mation on his own intrinsic merits, and
thus, without courting patronage by the vulgar
baits of ambition, pride, or charlatanism, the
afflicted will be encouraged to commit to
his judgement and skill their greatest earth-
ly blessing, life and health. How important
then, that all his actions be so regulated
that the highest objects of his vocation may
be attained as far as possible. *Hinc coronat opus.*

As due regard to external appearances will at once be appreciated, and should be in keeping with the dignity of his station and character of his mission. Extravagance ought carefully to be avoided on the one hand and parsimony on the other.

Having briefly alluded to the relations which the physician sustains to the public, I now propose to notice, with equal brevity, his relations to the sick. And first he should regard man only as man—as a fellow being—as a spirit whose corporeal individuality is but a decaying garment. As a physician his duties are superinduced. He is to recognize no privileged class—make no distinction between the affluent and indigent—the high or low.

He who is in the most prominent-suffered, greatest-suffering, needs, most, and above all others has a right to demand his services. Dives and Lazarus have like claims upon his kindest attention and most unwearyed faithfulness. He is to go forth, following the example of the Great Physician, who while on earth, made the homes of the sick, the desolate, and the sorrowful, the abodes of joy and gladness. It matters not whether the sufferer be stretched upon a couch of eider-down, sustained with satin and fringed with gold, while everything around him is indicative of the smiling presence of luxury and ease: or whether he be called to minister to one groaning upon an unwriting pallet of straw, surrounded but by privation and

want. He knows not the richest and most
enduring reward of his calling, who appre-
ciates his patients according to the smiles
or frowns of fortune. Though the physician
may move unmoved amid "the pestilences
that walketh in darkness and wasteth at
noonday" - the rich man will sometimes
imagine that ~~that~~ by the grudging pay-
ment of a fee he has redeemed all obli-
gations of thankfulness, unconscious that
it receives its greater value through a deeper
and nobler feeling, aside from which
the physician's attention and skill - his
anxiety and watchfulness, are ranged with
and prized only as the laborer's daily toil -
an equivalent for his services being rendered
in Dollars and cents. He is to forget all
minor interests - all human distinctions.

Hopes of affluence, and pleasure may neither
dance before the poor in their midnight
dreams, nor mingle with their daily toils—
there may be none to linger at their biers
or drop a tear of sorrow on their graves—
and yet their lives have the same inherent
value, and death is the same ineffable
evil. Let me not be misunderstood here.
I do not say that all lives are equally
valuable: but I assume as an axiom, and
therefore need no argument to prove, that
in any and all cases, life derives its highest
value from the vital principle itself; and not
from any adventitious, or concomitant cir-
cumstances or distinctions connected with it.
These are as varied and changeable as the
hues of the chameleon—they are as diversifi-
ed as the features, the talents, the influences,

the employments, the conditions and relations of men: they add to, or diminish the relative importance of different lives; but cannot affect the intrinsic value affixed to life itself - that vital spark which embosoms all of earth, and is held as a common possession. He who dispenses his remedial agents to the poor in sickness, regardless of pecuniary reward, will appear to them like an angel of consolation; and as the midnight of despair, which for a time hung over his patient, gently gives place to the bright morning of hope, the practitioner himself realizes the truth of the declaration, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The physician who views his profession as a strictly religious one - or in other words as a calling regulated by

the claims of conscience and not by the
amount of profit, need not fear being chilled
by the everlasting snows of want. The rich
will see - the poor will bless - and all will
recognize in a benefactor.

The balances of
life and death are sometimes so evenly ad-
justed, that the keenest penetration and most
mature judgment cannot determine, which
will finally preponderate. It is the physician's
duty under such circumstances to inform the
patient's friends of the impending danger.
As the fear of death adds materially to the
danger, and, in a majority of instances
diminishes the prospects of recovery, the proba-
bility of a fatal issue should be communi-
cated to the patient, only under peculiar cir-
cumstances. Although the City has

wisely reserved to himself the supreme control of life and death, he has also made it obligatory upon us to employ to the best of our abilities, the means which he has placed at our disposal, to preserve the one and avert the other: and hence the physician is bound alike by every precept of duty and tie of humanity, to cling to his patients, and even in the last extremity he should not forsake them - he may still be a solace, and when he cannot save life, he may alleviate suffering and thus smooth the bed of death. The relations which the physician sustains to his patients renders secrecy an indispensable element of his character. As a true minister of nature, he is called upon to worship at her most sacred shrine - no impure thought ^{should} encroach

upon the precincts of her sanctity - no profane gift sacrificed upon her altar! He is bound by a thousand ties, to keep the most absolute silence in regard to the secrets of every household. Not only the happiness of individuals but often of whole families, lies at his discretion, and to betray or abuse the confidence of his patients, would be to ignore that elevation and purity of principle, which should form a never-fading exponent of his character. It was my purpose to have said something of the physician's relations to his colleagues and to the profession, but conscious of having already taxed your patience full long, I am admonished to waive this design. Deeply impressed with the high moral responsibilities

resting upon him, who deals with the happiness, the health and life of mankind, I could not say less—I need not say more.—

It was doubtless expected that this dissertation would have some bearing on Homoeopathy; but of it I need say nothing. It speaks for itself in language more forcible than any which the most finished rhetoric can express,—its arguments more convincing than any which the most cogent reasoning can adduce. It has gone forth like the angel of the evangelist "conquering and to conquer"—it is marshaling its hosts in every clime. It is kindling its beacon fires in our valleys and proclaiming through its trumpet its redeeming mission to

suffering humanity upon our mountain tops. The gentle means, which it employs are engines, in skillful hands, more potent in storming disease, than were the ancient catapults of the Greeks or the batteringrams of the Romans in besieging a city: and the attempt to stay its progress or confine its limits, would be as unsuccessful as would be the effort to weave a web of midnight darkness from the effulgent beams of the meridian sun.

May our Alma Mater, the first, the brightest, and purest source of Homoeopathic instruction sanctioned by chartered privileges, increase the boundaries of her already widely extended influence and far famed reputation: Dispensing the

richness of her blessings by the clear and
steady light of her talismanic wand.

Similia similibus curantur; presenting a septan-
gular front, untarnished by any compro-
mise with Allopathy, Hydropathy or
Eclecticism. And may it be written of
her Alumni, faithful and true, - their
motto be - onward and upward - their
watchword - explore.